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ABSTRACT

The project Sharing and Celebrating Exemplary and Promising Programs annually identifies outstanding career and technical education (CTE) programs in secondary and postsecondary settings. The programs were evaluated by using criteria based on programs' quality, educational significance, effectiveness, and replicability. Programs and teachers also measured success through individual students' achievement. The following were among the key themes that emerged in the CTE success stories identified during the project's first year: (1) participating in CTE increases students' confidence and achievement; (2) most students learned about their CTE programs through recruiting activities from their career centers; (3) factors shaping students' decisions to enroll in CTE included the possibility of getting an early start on a college education, a match between interests and programs, visits to CTE programs, and visits from CTE instructors and counselors; (4) all the successful CTE students identified had one or more parents who supported their child's decision to enroll in CTE; (5) the successful CTE students felt pride in their achievements, and many rated their participation in student organizations as their best experiences in CTE; and (6) most of the successful CTE students credited CTE with influencing their career and educational goals, and a majority of the students were either planning on or already pursuing postsecondary education. (MN)

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Student Success Stories from Exemplary and Promising Career and Technical Education Programs Highlight Zone: Research @ Work No. 9

Diana Jackson

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Student Success Stories from Exemplary and Promising Career and Technical Education Programs

2002

by Diana Jackson

Sharing and Celebrating Exemplary and Promising Programs, a project of the National Dissemination Center for Career and Technical Education, annually identifies outstanding career and technical education (CTE) programs in both secondary and postsecondary settings. The programs are evaluated using criteria based on the quality of the program, its educational significance, evidence of the program's effectiveness, and replicability (see http://www.nccte.org/programs/exemplary/index.asp for more information on criteria). In addition to these measures, programs and teachers also measure success through the achievements of individual students.

This Highlight Zone presents the success stories of some of these individuals, focusing on secondary CTE programs. The examples are from Ohio because a high proportion of applicants for the exemplary designation in the first year were from that state. Teachers in promising and exemplary programs identified these young people as outstanding representatives of their students. As teachers and the students themselves shared information about their participation in CTE, common themes emerged, especially in the following areas:

- Increased confidence and achievement
- Deciding factors in enrollment
- Parental support for participation in CTE
- Levels of student motivation
- Post-graduation goals and plans

What Teachers Say about Achievement

Several teachers noted that participating in CTE programs built students' confidence. William Stanforth, a teacher in Great Oaks Institute of Technology's Animal Science and Management program, told of one student whose growth propelled him into college. Tim Baechle, a 2001 completer of the program, had been grooming dogs for 2 years, but still had little confidence in himself. After enrolling in the program, Tim "learned to move out of his comfort zone and establish goals and work ethics that have been outstanding. He served as our FFA [Future Farmers of America] Reporter his senior year and participated in the dog grooming career development events his junior and senior years. His team placed first in the state both years and he was second place individual his senior year."

Kathy Bickel, instructor in Interior Design and Decorating at Four County Career Center in Archbold, Ohio, made a similar report. "Andrea Moore came to Interior Design as a very insecure, shy student who could not see that she already possessed many skills that would help her in the Interior Design field. Due much in part to her dedication and hard work, she was able to advance to national levels in Family, Career, and Community Leaders of America [FCCLA] 2 years in a row. She has been a model student and has matured after 2 years in the program to a beautifully confident and enterprising young woman who will go on to be successful in whatever career she chooses."

Most teachers also reported that students' achievements increased along with their self-assurance. Melissa Rock, instructor in Cuyahoga Valley Career Center's Digital Design program, described 2001 completer Tim Ruszkiewicz. Despite having had no previous art training before enrolling in the program, Tim was an A student. "He was class president of Digital Design for a year and a half and was selected for and attended the Graphic Arts Experience at the Rochester Institute of Technology during his junior year. He participated in the 2000 State SkillsUSA-VICA Competition for Promotional Bulletin Board and won a bronze medal. He also received the 2001 Outstanding Student Award from the Cleveland Graphic Arts Council." Tim's accomplishments were not confined to the classroom. As a result of being chosen to attend a 3-day training session on graphics equipment for professional sports organizations, Tim secured an internship with the Cleveland Browns football team, assisting the Director of Scoreboard Operations. Perhaps the greatest testament to Tim's enthusiasm for and commitment to his program was a perfect attendance award for his senior year, despite suffering a knee injury in soccer.

Educational, Career Opportunities Deciding Factors for Many

Most students said they learned about their programs through recruiting activities from their career centers. These students were attracted to CTE programs for a variety of reasons. For students like Christi Bosscawen, the possibility of getting an early start on her college education attracted her: "The thing that made me enroll in the program is that I would be able to get all my high school credits and also get college credits through the Allied Health program."

For other students, the deciding factor was a match between their interests and a program. Crystal Kunkel, a 2002 completer of the Animal Science and Management program at the Great Oaks Institute of Technology and Career Development, said that prior to investigating the program, "I really enjoyed working with animals. I already knew it would be hard work, so I was prepared for this program."

Seeing the programs for themselves was often the determining factor in the decision to enroll. Carol Hendricks' visit to the Early Childhood Education program at Medina County Career Center sold her on the program. "When I went and saw the program in the 10th grade, to see what it was all about, I knew I had to sign up for the course. I loved watching children and helping them learn, and I knew this was the program I needed to take."

For Tim Baechle, a visit from one of Great Oaks' Animal Science and Management program's instructors to his home school sparked his interest. When he visited the Live Oaks campus, he realized that he knew he wanted "a career in the animal field and this program looked like the best place to start."

Christi Bosscawen found out about Fairfield Career Center's Allied Health Tech Prep program when a counselor from the Career Center visited her home school. Anne Conner, a teacher in the program, said that after her introduction to the program, "Christi came to every open house and visitation offered at Fairfield Career Center."

Parent Support a Key

All of these successful students had a parent or parents who supported their child's decision to enroll in a career and technical program. Crystal Kunkel said, "My mother and father were just as excited as I was. They attended all visitations with me and supported me all the way." According to Tiffany Grieser,

an Interior Design and Decorating Services student at Four County Career Center, Archbold, Ohio, "My parents both thought it would be good for me. They thought I would be good at interior design, and they were behind me 100%."

Once students began to attend CTE programs, parents were impressed by their children's accomplishments. Laura Schneider, a 2002 completer of the Digital Design program at Cuyahoga Valley Career Center, Brecksville, Ohio, reported that her parents were "extremely excited" about her decision to attend, and that they "love to see my great work when I use technology such as Adobe Photoshop." According to Andrea Moore, a student in Interior Design and Decorating Services at Four County Career Center, "My mom and dad have always supported my decisions in everything I've done, and they thought this was a good choice. They are very pleased with my participation because I have achieved so much."

Active Involvement Leads to High Motivation

A prominent theme among successful students was the pride they felt in their achievements. Many rated their participation in student organizations as their best experiences in the programs.

A service project took Andrea Moore all the way to Disney World. "FCCLA has a contest every year. My junior year, our chapter participated in a star event called Chapter Service. For our project, 'In Pursuit of Literacy,' we went to schools in our four-county area and gave kindergartners coloring books that we made. These coloring books showed the importance of being able to read in different occupations. Two other classmates and I took the project to regional and state competitions. We came in second at state, so we got to participate in 'Spotlight on Projects' at nationals in Orlando, Florida. It was the best time I've had in my 2 years in this program."

For Kathleen Wright, a student in Animal Science and Management, Great Oaks Institute of Technology, Cincinnati, Ohio, a national award also counted as her best experience. "I was able to apply for and win the National Small Animal Care Proficiency Award. I received it at the National FFA Convention in 2000."

Crystal Kunkel stated that knowing others are counting on her sets her program apart from other school activities. "This program has built up my confidence and self-esteem. I don't dread getting up in the morning like I did when I attended my home school. Knowing that animals are counting on my hard work and dedication, I am motivated to be here." While still in high school, Crystal operated her own grooming business through a local veterinary clinic. She was responsible for grooming the animals, as well as for purchasing her own equipment, scheduling appointments, and maintaining her own business records. She said that her participation in the program helped her establish her goals of continuing her business and pursuing a degree at Findlay College.

Students Develop Clear Career and Educational Goals

All of these students credited their CTE programs with influencing their career and educational goals. Brittany Yoss, Early Childhood Education, Medina County Career Center, Medina, Ohio, said, "The program has influenced my goals by reinforcing my love for children and the joy I see on their faces when they learn something new. The children and my teacher have inspired me to keep working hard." Brittany, who competed in Anaheim, California at the 2001 FCCLA National Conference, plans to attend a community college in early childhood education. Her eventual goal is to graduate from a four-year college with a degree in special education.

A majority of these successful CTE students reported educational goals that include postsecondary education. Tim Baechle worked at the University of Cincinnati in the Department of Laboratory Animal Medicine during his senior year and enrolled in the Veterinary Technology Program in fall 2001. He plans to complete an associate's degree and eventually a bachelor's degree and possibly attend veterinary school.

Christi Bosscawen plans to become a Registered Nurse in the labor and delivery unit of a hospital. She was awarded a Tech Prep scholarship to Columbus State Community College, where she is enrolled in the nursing program. She said that her CTE program "influenced my goals by helping me choose what career I want and helping me experience it to know that is what I really want. This program has helped me with learning to be organized and to be ready to take college classes."

Mike Young, a completer of Cuyahoga Valley Career Center's Digital Design program, now attends Bowling Green State University after earning As in his CTE program and receiving multiple awards, including the Outstanding Student Award for Digital Design, and gold, silver, and bronze medals in State SkillsUSA-VICA competitions.

In Their Own Words

The achievements of these CTE students speak for themselves. Nevertheless, the students stressed their pride in not only their own accomplishments, but in their programs.

Christi Bosscawen said that if she could tell other students one thing about the Allied Health program at Fairfield Career Center, it would be that "this program will help anyone who wants to go into the medical field and get ready for college."

Crystal Kunkel said that hers was "an awesome program." But she cautioned that other students who enter the Animal Science program must be prepared to work hard. "Students who enter this program are dedicated workers who strive to succeed." Tim Baechle seconded her opinion. The program, he said, "is a great way to start learning."

Student Success Stories

- Tim Baechle, Animal Science and Management, Great Oaks Institute of Technology, Cincinnati, Ohio
- Christi Bosscawen, Allied Health Technology, Fairfield Career Center, Carroll, Ohio
- Tiffany Grieser, Interior Design and Decorating Services, Four County Career Center, Archbold, Ohio
- Carol Hendricks, Early Childhood Education, Medina County Career Center, Medina, Ohio
- Crystal Kunkel, Animal Science and Management, Great Oaks Institute of Technology, Cincinnati, Ohio
- Andrea Moore, Interior Design and Decorating Services, Four County Career Center, Archbold, Ohio
- Tom Ruszkiewicz, Digital Design, Cuyahoga Valley Career Center, Brecksville, Ohio
- Laura Schneider, Digital Design, Cuyahoga Valley Career Center, Brecksville, Ohio
- Brittany Yoss, Early Childhood Education, Medina County Career Center, Medina, Ohio
- Kathleen Wright, Animal Science and Management, Great Oaks Institute of Technology, Cincinnati, Ohio
- Mike Young, Digital Design, Cuyahoga Valley Career Center, Brecksville, Ohio

The Highlight Zone: Research @ Work is designed to highlight research findings and provide a synthesis of other information sources. The intention is to help practitioners apply and adapt research results for local use.

Diana Jackson is Co-Director of the Ohio Learning-Work Connection, Center on Education and Training for Employment, the Ohio State University.

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